

# **“Getting the message”**

**The SMS revolution and its  
potential for the global  
conservation and development  
effort**

**Ken Banks, [kiwanja.net](http://kiwanja.net)**

# Presentation outline .....

- A very short history of SMS
- Texting by numbers
- "I'm fired?" Strange things can happen by text...
- Text messaging: A social revolution
- Removing the SMS barriers...
- The FrontlineSMS story
- Questions (and perhaps some answers)

# A short history of SMS .....

'Invented' by Finnish civil servant **Matti Makkonen** in 1982

The first text message was sent by **Neil Papworth** on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1992 in the UK on the Vodafone network

It was sent to **Richard Jarvis**, a Vodafone executive

The first message? "Merry Christmas!" 

Lift-off: But it wasn't until **1998** that text messages could be sent across different UK networks...

# Mobile phone numbers .....

- **133,000,000** UK text messages sent over new year 2005/6
- On average **3,000,000** messages are sent in the UK every hour
- **217.76 billion** texts were sent in China throughout 2004
- An estimated **43%** of SMS's are spam we never get to see
- Mobile penetration in Europe is set to hit **100%** by 2007
- Over **2 billion** people own mobile phones globally
- Around **400,000,000** of those live in China alone
- SMS is being increasingly used in a wide range of 'activities'..

# Strange Messaging Service .....

Before we get serious...

... time for some of the more 'unusual' uses of SMS

# "ur sacked..."

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## Bust company sacks workers by text

The UK's largest personal injury claims firm, Accident Group, has sacked 2,400 people - many by text message - after its parent company Amulet Group announced on Friday that it would go into administration.



Shocked workers take in the news outside the firm's HQ

Staff with company mobile phones received a series of text messages, warning them that salaries would not be paid.

Manchester-based Amulet Group said its subsidiary had to cease trading because it could not sustain its "continual battles with the insurance industry" and after "the sudden failure of a banking partner to support the company".

The administrators, though, blame Accident Group's "lower than expected claims success rate" for the financial difficulties, which they say "resulted in increased insurance premiums on new business and retrospective claims from the underwriters".

### WATCH AND LISTEN

**The BBC's Rory Cellan-Jones**  
"The company's hard-sell techniques had proved controversial"

▶ VIDEO



**BBC Manchester**  
News and more from the BBC Manchester website

### SEE ALSO:

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“ur fired...”



His Majesty King Mswati III of  
The Kingdom of Swaziland

Prime Minister  
Sibusiso Dlamini



# “Short Marriage Service”



Malaysia has updated an Islamic Sharia law which permits men to end a marriage by repeating the simple phrase “talaq” (I divorce thee) three times. Taking new technologies into account, an Islamic law court in Malaysia said it would recognise a divorce if an Islamic man sent the phrase three times to his spouse

(Reported 28<sup>th</sup> July 2003 – **“SMS Divorce to be Banned”** - 31<sup>st</sup> July)



# "Bible cre8td 4 a nu wrld"



In da Bginnin God cre8d da heavens & da earth. Da earth waz barren, wit no 4m of life; it waz unda a roaring ocean cuvred wit dRkness...

Genesis Chapter 1, Verses 1-2

# “Put the kettle on...”



(According to a PG Tips spokesperson):

“This could revolutionise tea-time. Now there is no excuse for not putting the kettle on”

# Socially beneficial SMS .....



In South Africa a local doctor has developed a pill bottle that uses mobile technology to remind patients to take their medicines and warns them if they are about to take an extra dose by mistake

# Socially beneficial SMS .....

Text messaging is being successfully used in countries such as Nigeria and South Africa to provide health information on disease and illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis



# Socially beneficial SMS .....



New technology in Uganda is helping farmers find out the real price of their crops – and avoid being cheated by unscrupulous middlemen...

# Socially beneficial SMS .....

One World in Kenya provide a job information service aimed at blue-collar workers and employers offering details of jobs in more than 40 categories from carpenters to secretaries





# Socially beneficial SMS .....



At least five countries have begun developing an alert system using cell phone text messages, a response to the catastrophic Asian tsunami that exposed flaws in present-day early warning schemes

# Socially beneficial SMS .....



“British mobile phone users have donated over £1m to the Disasters Emergency tsunami appeal fund using text messages”

Computing Magazine, Jan 2005

# Socially beneficial SMS .....

SMS early warning systems can mitigate against human/wildlife conflict around national parks



# Removing SMS barriers .....

The use of text messaging to provide a wide range of useful, relevant content to local communities is clear...

**So why aren't we all doing it?  
(assuming you want to)**

# Removing SMS barriers .....

**Technical:** Which system is best for me?

**Knowledge:** A reluctance to share experiences

**Cost:** The price to implement SMS services?

**Suitability:** Few systems developed for NGOs

**Simplicity:** Solutions need to be low maintenance

**Infrastructure:** Needs to work in remote areas

# Constructing a solution .....

**Share:** A place to talk about NGOs and SMS use

**Cost:** A low cost, works out-of-the-box solution

**Suitability:** Developed with NGO community in mind

**Simplicity:** Simple, intuitive, low maintenance

**Independence:** Using widely available GSM networks

**Implementation:** 'Top down' and 'Bottom up'



# FrontlineSMS ingredients .....



laptop



cable



pcmcia modem



mobile

# "SMS Hub in a Box" .....



ContactManager



SurveyManager



SurveyAnalyst



SendConsole

MessageTracker



ReceiveConsole



ReplyManager



TrafficMonitor



# Thank you .....

“As we sit with our broadband connected computers, surfing the web, rattling off email and IMs, Skyping intercontinentally and publishing our ideas and opinions all over the world with blogging software, it's easy to forget that much of the world just isn't like that. Broadband connections (or even dear old dial-up connections) are a rarity in much of the developing world, including (but not limited) to the massive populations of China, India and Africa...”

**kiwanja.net**

TURNING TECHNOLOGY INTO OPPORTUNITY

**Ken Banks**  
Managing Director

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[ken.banks@kiwanja.net](mailto:ken.banks@kiwanja.net) **email**  
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